

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DURBAN 00370 230847Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
IO-13 EUR-12 /089 W
-----026993 231131Z /14

R 230700Z JUN 78
FM AMCONSUL DURBAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2963
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

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EO 11652: NA
TAGS: PINT, PINS, SF
SUBJ: WALTER FELGATE: INFLUENCE WITH BUTHELEZI MAY BE WANING

REF: 77 DURBAN A-28

1. SUMMARY: RECENT CONVERSATIONS WITH INKATHA OFFICIALS AND KNOWLEDGEABLE WHITE OBSERVERS INDICATE ANY INFLUENCE WALTER FELGATE HERETOFORE ENJOYED WITH CHIEF BUTHELEZI MAY BE WANING, REPORTEDLY BECAUSE OF FELGATE'S HEAVY HANDED ATTEMPTS TO INDUCE BUTHELEZI TO ADOPT A MORE RADICAL LINE IN THE INKATHA NEWSPAPER, "THE NATION". FELGATE'S ROLE IN MANAGING AND, IN FACT, FUNDING "THE NATION" APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN SUBSTANTIAL AND IT IS APPARENTLY THE ABSENCE OF A READILY AVAILABLE REPLACEMENT FOR HIS FINANCIAL LARGESSE WHICH CONTINUES TO PROVIDE FELGATE SOME ACCESS TO BUTHELEZI. END SUMMARY

2. RECENT CONVERSATIONS WITH INKATHA LEADERS DR. DENIS MADIDE AND DR. S.M. BENGU AS WELL AS WITH WHITE JOURNALIST TIME MUIL AND PROFESSOR LAWRENCE SCHLEMMER INDICATE WALTER FELGATE NO LONGER MAY BE AS INFLUENTIAL WITH CHIEF GATSHA BUTHELEZI
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PAGE 02 DURBAN 00370 230847Z

AS PREVIOUSLY (REFAIR). OUR SOURCES ATTRIBUTE FELGATE'S ECLIPSE TO HIS EXTENDED ABSENCE FROM SA FROM SEPTEMBER 1977 UNTIL MARCH 1978, AS WELL AS TO A SUBSEQUENT HEAVY HANDED EFFORT TO PERSUADE BUTHELEZI TO PURSUE MORE RADICAL LINES. THEY CONTEND FELGATE ATTEMPTED TO USE HIS ECONOMIC LEVERAGE OVER BUTHELEZI (I.E., FUNDING INKATHA'S MONTHLY MOUTHPIECE, THE NATION) TO INDUCE HIM TO VOICE MORE RADICAL POLITICAL LINES IN THE PAPER

THAN THE CHIEF DESIRED. THE CONTROVERSY ALLEGEDLY CAME TO A HEAD AT A MAY MEETING IN ULUNDI WHEN BUTHELEZI CRITICIZED THE NATION'S RECENT EDITORIAL LINE, PARTICULARLY THE APRIL ISSUE WHICH PERSONALLY ATTACKED DR. NYEMBEZI (INKATHA'S SOWETO LEADER) FOR HIS ROLE IN COOPERATING WITH PLURAL AFFAIRS MINISTER MULDER IN OBTAINING THE RELEASE OF SOME MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE OF TEN AND IN PLEDGING INKATHA'S PARTICIPATION IN SOWETO MUNICIPAL ELECTION. REPORTEDLY THAT STORY WAS PUBLISHED BY FELGATE AFTER BUTHELEZI SPECIFICALLY ORDERED IT REMOVED.

3. SOURCES STATE FELGATE'S RELATIONSHIP WITH BUTHELEZI IS NOT YET TERMINATED, HOWEVER, LARGELY BECAUSE THE CHIEF HAS NO READY REPLACEMENT FOR THE MONEY FELGATE SEEMS TO HAVE AVAILABLE. MUIL, WHO EDITED THE NATION UNTIL LAST JANUARY, SAID FELGATE PUT UP IN EXCESS OF R100,000 (\$115,000) AT THE TIME THE NATION WAS STARTED AND ABSORBED A PRODUCTION LOSS OF R60,000 (\$70,000) IN 1977 ALONE. AFTER FELGATE'S UNEXPLAINED ABSENCE FROM SOUTH AFRICA (REPORTEDLY IN SWEDEN AND THE NETHERLANDS) HE RETURNED THREE MONTHS AGO WITH MORE READY CASH, AGAIN REPORTEDLY IN EXCESS OF R100,000, AND A PROPOSAL TO PUBLISH THE NATION ON A WEEKLY OR DAILY BASIS WITH TWO EDITIONS, ONE FOR THE REEF AND ONE IN NATAL.

4. COMMENT: SEVERAL POST SOURCES, INCLUDING SOME OF THE ABOVE, HAVE PREVIOUSLY ADVANCED THE THEORY THAT FELGATE WAS BEHIND THE ANTI-US AND ANTI-WESTERN TONE OF SOME OF BUTHELEZI'S LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 DURBAN 00370 230847Z

1976 AND 1977 SPEECHES. FELGATE HAS NOT BEEN BASHFUL IN DESCRIBING HIMSELF TO US AS AN ANC CONDUIT, AND HE FREQUENTLY VOICES HIS DISTRUST OF WESTERN MOTIVES AND ACTIONS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA. THE EVIDENCE WOULD SEEM TO INDICATE THAT FELGATE PROBABLY HAS ATTEMPTED SOMETHING OF AN "EMINENCE ROUGE" OPERATION WITH BUTHELEZI, USING HIS FINANCIAL LEVERAGE WITH "THE NATION" TO THAT PURPOSE. HOWEVER BUTHELEZI'S OWN STRONG-MINDEDNESS AND ADHERENCE TO PRINCIPLE IS WELL KNOWN - OUR CONCLUSION BEING THAT IF FELGATE'S BLANDISHMENTS PRODUCE ANY OF THE "INFLUENCE" ALLEGED, IT WAS MORE LIKELY A PRODUCT OF BUTHELEZI'S WELL KNOWN, GROWING FRUSTRATION WITH THE US AND THE WEST AND DESIRE FOR TANGIBLE SUPPORT RATHER THAN HIS RECEPTIVITY TO ARGUMENTS FOR RADICALIZATION PER SE.

5. THE SOURCE OF FELGATE'S FUNDS TO SUPPORT "THE NATION" IS AN INTERESTING ELEMENT OF THE RELATIONSHIP. FELGATE CLAIMS THEY ARE DONATIONS FROM SCANDINAVIAN CHURCH GROUPS. HOW EXTENSIVE FELGATE'S PERSONAL AND BUSINESS RESOURCES ARE IS NOT KNOWN, BUT IT HAS BEEN DIFFICULT FOR BUTHELEZI/INKATHA TO IGNORE THE OFFER OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR THEIR IMPOVERISHED NEWSPAPER. FOR THAT REASON, IN THE ABSENCE OF SUPPORT FROM OTHER QUARTERS, IT IS PROBABLY PREMATURE TO ASSUME THAT

FELGATE'S RELATIONSHIP WITH BUTHELEZI HAS ENDED.
FARBER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SPHERE OF INFLUENCE, POLITICAL PARTIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978DURBAN00370
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780262-0183
Format: TEL
From: DURBAN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780627/aaaaawzp.tel
Line Count: 118
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 5f8ca182-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 DURBAN A-28
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2231573
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: WALTER FELGATE: INFLUENCE WITH BUTHELEZI MAY BE WANING
TAGS: PINT, PINS, SOPN, SF, (BUTHELEZI, GATSHA), (FELGATE, WALTER)
To: STATE PRETORIA
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/5f8ca182-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014